AMERICA'S TRIBUTE TO EDISON

By J. M. SHULMAN

ALL the scientific world paused on the eleventh day of February to honor the ninety-first anniversary of the birth of Thomas Alva Edison. On that day, in a commemoration ceremony befitting one of the greatest and most highly esteemed inventors of all time, the Edison Memorial Tower at Menlo Park, New Jersey, was dedicated.

Perpetual light is the theme of the tower, an impressive structure of concrete and glass rising to an over-all height of 131 feet and containing within an enclosure of black granite set at ground level a lighted replica of the first practical incandescent lamp. This light was first switched on in October, 1929, during the celebration of Light's Golden Jubilee by Mr. Edison himself from Dearborn, Michigan, and has been kept lighted without interruption since that time. It was unharmed by lightning which last year struck and demolished the temporary steel tower in which it was housed. The lamp is fed by several current sources simultaneously in such a way as to guard against its going out because of failure of any one source.

The tower itself is octagonal in shape and is constructed of concrete slabs which form the eight faces. At the top is a huge glass bulb almost 14 feet in height and 9 feet in diameter at its widest part, containing 153 separate pieces of amber-tinted pyrex glass. Under sunlight this glass produces a beautiful sparkling effect, and at night it is illuminated by flood lights and by three sets of specially placed light bulbs consuming a total of 5200 watts. On one of the sides of the octagonal base of the tower is a bronze door containing a glass plate through which can be viewed the source of perpetual light. On each of the other seven sides of the base is a bronze tablet describing inventions made by Edison at his Menlo Park laboratory.

Located on the site of Edison's original Menlo Park laboratory, the Edison Tower marks the exact spot where on October 21, 1879, the incandescent lamp was born. Though built and dedicated primarily as a commemorative to Edison's accomplishments at Menlo Park in the decade of his work there from 1876 to 1886, it will stand as a lasting tribute to all his achievements and a lasting reminder of his fruitful efforts to make the world a better place to live.

Edison was born in Milan, Ohio, on February 11, 1847. Early in his boyhood an insatiable desire for knowledge and experimenting asserted itself, and his boundless energy and ambition led him into many boyish enterprises. From a job of selling newspapers on trains in southeastern Michigan he turned to printing a weekly newspaper and establishing a laboratory in one of the baggage cars attached to the train. Then an opportunity to learn telegraphy presented itself, and by the time he was fifteen years of age he had obtained his first job as an operator in Port Huron. Six years later he went to Boston as a Western Union operator and soon acquired the reputation of being one of the country's fastest, most proficient telegraphers.

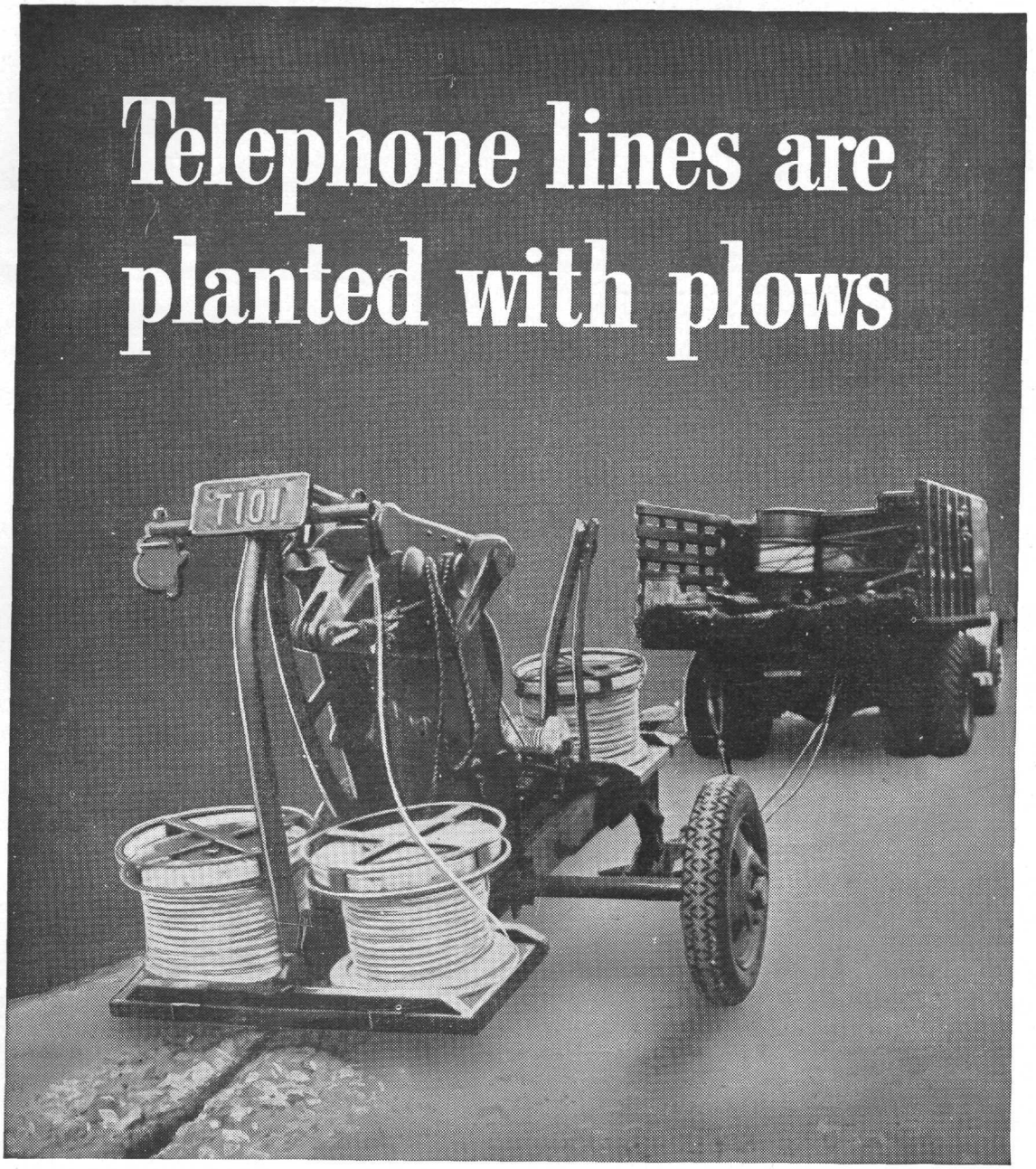
It was in Boston that Edison made his first patented invention, the "vote recorder." He then went to New York where he became engaged in perfecting important improvments in the stock ticker. Selling his inventions along this line, he opened a shop and laboratory in Newark, there to manufacture stock tickers, carry on his other experiments, and assist Sholes in making a practical typewriter, now known as the "Remington." In 1872 he perfected an automatic telegraph system and two years later perfected the duplex and quadruplex systems of telegraphy. Other inventions came in rapid succession at this time, among which were the telegraph relay, the electric pen, the mimeograph, and numerous new systems of telegraphy.

In 1876 Edison moved to Menlo Park and began at this time to devote himself entirely to his research work. His years spent at Menlo Park resulted in mankind being the richer by a long series of inventions of inestimable value. He invented the carbon microphone and at the same time brought out the condenser and dynamic microphones used today for radio transmission. In the same year, 1877, he invented the phonograph. Then in 1878 he originated the central station supply system for the electrical transmission of heat, light, and power, making way for his discovery of "the miracle of light" the next year. Along this line he developed the first efficient dynamo, the first constant potential electric motor, the first electric light meter, lamp socket, fuses, switches, and all such components of a complete system of current distribution.

In 1880 came the first electric locomotive having a highly efficient motor applicable to modern forms of electrical transportation. In 1883 Edison discovered the "Edison Effect" which was later to prove the basis of operation of the modern radio tube. Invention of the first practical motion picture camera came in 1891, and in 1900 came the alkaline storage battery.

Edison was beloved for his humanness and his kindly sense of humor. Jovially he would give out bits of philosophy which if pondered on would take on extreme significance. Asked for the secret of his success, he confided that it was "the ability to stick to a thing." He laughed at those who spoke of his genius. "All bosh," he protested. "Clean hard work is what does the business. Genius is two per cent inspiration and ninety-eight per cent perspiration."

Telephone lines are planted with plows



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